



Protecting yourself against malaria

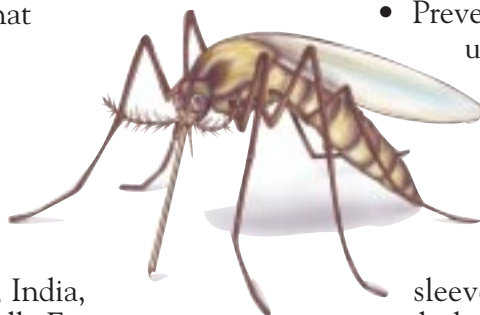
Malaria is a serious disease that infects about 50,000 international travelers each year. The disease is present in more than 100 countries worldwide, mostly in Central and South America, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Africa, India, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

The disease is caused by a parasite carried by some mosquitoes. Humans can become infected when they are bitten by a mosquito that has the parasites. Symptoms tend to develop 1 to 4 weeks after infection, although it is possible to fall ill as many as 12 months or longer after being bitten. Symptoms include fever and flulike illness (shaking, chills, nausea and vomiting, and muscle aches, for example), and possibly anemia and jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and eyes). If left untreated, the infection can be fatal.

Preventing infection

Although malaria can be cured by taking prescription drugs, it is better to prevent infection in the first place. Thus, if you are planning to travel overseas, you should:

- Visit your health care provider 4 to 6 weeks before traveling to determine whether your destination is in one of the 100 countries with a malaria problem. If so, he or she will recommend any necessary vaccinations and a prescription for an antimalarial drug. Be sure to take all drugs exactly as prescribed.
- Take your antimalarial drug exactly on schedule; do not miss a dose.



- Prevent mosquito and other insect bites by using insect repellent with DEET on exposed skin and insect repellent with permethrin on your clothing (mosquitoes can bite through some materials). Use flying insect spray in the room where you sleep.

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts as much as possible from dusk to dawn—the time when mosquitoes that spread malaria are biting. Because dark-colored clothing attracts mosquitoes, wear light colors.

- If you will not be living in screened or air-conditioned housing, sleep under mosquito netting that has been dipped in permethrin. Use netting that is big enough to cover you and touch the floor all around the bed or be tucked under the mattress.

- If you become ill with a fever or flulike illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area or up to 1 year after returning home, seek immediate medical attention and tell your physician your travel history. Although deaths from malaria in American travelers are rare, almost all such travelers who have died from malaria are people who failed to associate early symptoms with malarial infection. Early medical attention and diagnosis are critical.

To find out more information on malaria and whether your overseas destination is a malaria high-risk area, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> or call their Fax Information Service at 888-232-3299.